

**The American Legion
Department of Nebraska
Department Executive Committee Minutes
March 16, 2023
ZOOM Conference Call**

A Special Department Executive Committee meeting of the Nebraska American Legion was called to order by Department Commander Don Suchy at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM. Commander Suchy asked Adjutant Dave Salak to do a roll call of officers to determine if there was a quorum.

Present were Commander Don Suchy, Senior Vice Commander John Henry Percy, Area A Vice Commander Carl Lorenzen, Area B Vice Commander Kenneth Meyer, Area C Vice Commander Richard Binder, Past Department Commander Gary Wooten, Past Department Commander Dan Benes, District 1 Commander Judy Walters, District 2 Commander Kelly Hanvey, District 3 Commander Mike Ellis, District 4 Commander Steve Stanec, District 5 Commander Scott Bell, District 6 Commander Julie Schnitzler, District 7 Commander Jerry Schulte, District 8 Commander Bruce Husted, District 10 Commander Don Nelson, District 12 Commander William Lawrence, and District 15 Commander Bruce Gubser. National representative in attendance was Alternate NECman Jim Costello. Area D Vice Commander Gene VonForell, Past Department Commander Lyle Bartels, District 11 Commander Tom Crisman, District 13 Commander Scott Buss were absent. District 9 Commander Ron Wiest and NECman Fred Craigie were excused. Also present on the call were Department Executive Assistant Amanda Washburn, Judge Advocate William Harris, Department Auxiliary President Vicki Ozenbaugh, and District 7 Vice Commander Adam Schweitzer.

Judge Advocate Harris declared a quorum.

Commander Suchy asked everyone to stand for a salute to Colors. A moment of silence was observed. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the POW-MIA "Empty Chair" ceremony was observed. The Preamble was recited by all in attendance.

Commander Suchy asked Adjutant Salak to take roll officially since a few more had arrived. Past Department Commander Lyle Bartels was added to above roll call.

Commander Suchy extended a welcome to members and guests to this meeting. He stated that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the current 2023 Department Convention situation. Commander Suchy shared that Adjutant Salak had been dealing with the Ramada Inn in Kearney for many years and they had hosted many Conventions and Conferences. In the last year, the Ramada has experienced a high rate of turnover, and this in turn has created a lot of complaints from Legion family members to Department Headquarters. The biggest issue is that no one answers the phone at the hotel, or if a reservation is made, they may be lost or the rate per night fluctuates between the agreed \$84 a night up to \$129 a night. Adjutant Salak has visited the hotel twice and has spoken to the hotel staff and the manager. On two occasions, he has asked Bill Crosier of Kearney to stop by the hotel to ask them to respond to email or phone calls. The biggest issue is the upkeep of the facility and the disrepair of it as well. Bill Crosier had stated that on his last visit the pool and lobby restrooms were out of order and that the bar was closed. Commander Suchy also shared that he had stayed there in February, and that there were issues then. Kearney was also awarded the 2024 Department Convention bid.

Adjutant Salak stated he contacted the Kearney Visitors Bureau to see if they had any other contact information or ideas on what should be done. He stated that they were having some of the same issues and had suggested that a letter be drafted to terminate the contract if things didn't improve. Salak had contacted both the Younes Convention Center in Kearney and the Ramada Inn in Columbus to see the feasibility of moving the Convention there. Younes stated that they could hold the Convention, but the guest room rate would be \$129.95 and they didn't know if there would be a charge for the meeting rooms. Columbus stated that they could hold the Convention at \$95 for guest room rate, but the Ballroom was unavailable on Saturday and

the Legion meetings would have to be held in an alternative location. The Visitors Bureau said that they could assist in finding a location. He then shared that the CEO from the Colorado Hospitality Group (Kelsey Houser) had phoned him around 5:00 p.m. to express their apologies for what had been happening, and that they were actively sending employees to Kearney to work with and on the hotel. Salak said that she told him the manager he had been working with was fired, the pool pump had gone out and that its parts were on order, and the bathrooms were a priority repair as well. She also stated that the front desk would be staffed and that phone calls would be answered.

Commander Suchy opened up the floor for discussion. Discussion was held and it included selecting an alternative location. Norfolk, Nebraska City, Ogallala, North Platte, LaVista, Omaha, Lincoln, and Grand Island were mentioned but Adjutant Salak noted they were either too small for the requirements of Convention, or too high priced for meeting room space. There was also mention that having convention too far to the east would limit number of delegates travelling from far west Nebraska.

PDC Wooten made a motion to give authority to the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to seek an alternative location for the 2023 Department Convention as soon as possible. If the Ramada Inn does not address their issues, then the contract should be terminated, and the location moved. Second by Bruce Husted. Discussion was held. These items included that there was no current contract with the Ramada Inn so there should be no cancellation fees and that Adjutant Salak would notify everyone about the final decision and that no one should cancel their reservations at the Ramada.

Adjutant Salak called the roll of DEC members for vote:

Senior Vice Commander John Henry Percy	Aye
Area A Vice Commander Carl Lorenzen	Aye
Area B Vice Commander Kenneth Meyer	Aye
Area C Vice Commander Richard Binder	Aye
Area D Vice Commander Gene VonForell	Absent
PDC Lyle Bartels	Aye
PDC Gary Wooten	Aye
PDC Dan Benes	Aye
District 1 Commander Judy Walters	Aye
District 2 Commander Kelly Harvey	Aye
District 3 Commander Mike Ellis	Aye
District 4 Commander Steve Stanec	Aye
District 5 Commander Scott Bell	Aye
District 6 Commander Julie Schnitzler	Aye
District 7 Commander Jerry Schulte	Aye
District 8 Commander Bruce Husted	Aye
District 9 Commander Ron Wiest	Excused
District 10 Commander Don Nelson	Aye
District 11 Commander Tom Crisman	Absent
District 12 Commander William Lawrence	Aye
District 13 Commander Scott Buss	Absent
District 15 Commander Bruce Gubser	Abstained

Adjutant Salak announced 17 aye votes, 1 abstained, 1 excused, and 3 absent.

Commander Suchy announced that the motion passed.

Commander Suchy stated that Adjutant Dave would be the one sending out anything if the location changes, until then, the Convention is still planned for the Kearney Ramada Inn June 22 - 25, 2023.

Area A Vice Commander Lorenzen suggested that a DEC meeting be called for discussion of the District Conventions, membership, and a tour of the new Headquarters building on May 6th at 10:00 a.m. Commander Suchy stated that until the final closing date, that nothing will be planned, and that if a meeting was called that Department would have to pay for any travel for DEC members.

PDC Wooten then asked if a building dedication and open house would be held. Commander Suchy explained that once the Legion owned the building that those would be planned, but he didn't want to get too far ahead of themselves.

Commander Suchy asked if anyone had anything else for the good of The American Legion.

Having no further business to conduct at the Department Executive Committee the meeting adjournment at 8:00 p.m.

David W. Salak
Department Adjutant

APPROVED